

Message Text

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ORIGIN AF-10

INFO OCT-01 ARA-10 EUR-12 NEA-10 ISO-00 SP-02 INR-10
IO-13 NSCE-00 INRE-00 PM-05 DODE-00 CIAE-00
NSAE-00 L-03 H-01 /077 R

DRAFTED BY AF/E:RPOST:AB
APPROVED BY AF:WHARROP
NEA/ARP:JTWINAM
S/P:PKREISBERG
INR:HCAMPBELL
ARA:WSMITH
IO:GHELMAN

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O R 212031Z MAR 78
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO IMMEDIATE
INFO AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
AMEMBASSY NAIROBI
USINT HAVANA
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 072519

FOR SPECIAL PRESIDENTIAL EMISSARY MOOSE

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, ET, UR, CU, SA

SUBJECT:ERITREA

FOLLOWING ARE POINTS AND QUESTIONS ON ERITREA WHICH YOU
MIGHT WISH TO DRAW ON IN CONVERSATIONS WITH SAUDI OFFICIALS:

1. RE POSSIBILITY THAT SOVIET AND CUBAN FORCES MIGHT SHIFT

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TO ERITREA, WE HAD REPORTS PRIOR TO THE SOMALI WITHDRAWAL
INDICATING THE PRESENCE OF SOME SOVIETS AND CUBANS IN
MASSAWA, ASSAB AND ASMARA. WHILE WE DO HAVE REPORTS OF
TRANSFERS OF ETHIOPIAN TROOPS FROM THE OGADEN TO ERITREA,
WE DO NOT HAVE SUCH REPORTS ABOUT SOVIET AND CUBAN COMBAT
ELEMENTS. WE WILL, OF COURSE, BE MONITORING THIS SITUATION
CLOSELY AND WILL CONTINUE TO BE IN TOUCH WITH THE SAG.

(FYI: INR CONSIDERS IT LIKELY THAT, DESPITE CUBAN DENIALS, CUBAN COMBAT UNITS WILL BE USED IN ERITREA. END FYI).

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2. WE QUESTION WHETHER ETHIOPIA CAN, EVEN WITH THE KIND OF ASSISTANCE IT RECEIVED IN THE OGADEN FROM THE SOVIETS AND CUBANS, EFFECTIVELY CRUSH THE ERITREAN INSURGENCY. WE BELIEVE THAT WITH SUCH HELP THE ETHIOPIANS COULD INDEED RETAKE AND HOLD THE TOWNS AND CITIES AND KEEP THE ROADS OPEN BUT WOULD BE UNABLE TO CONTROL THE COUNTRYSIDE. IF THIS WERE TO HAPPEN, WHAT WOULD BE THE SAG ATTITUDE TOWARD ASSISTANCE TO THE RESIDUAL ERITREAN INSURGENCY?

3. WE WOULD BE INTERESTED IN ANY INFORMATION THE SAUDIS MIGHT BE WILLING TO SHARE WITH US CONCERNING THE TYPES AND AMOUNTS OF AID THE DIFFERENT ERITREAN GROUPS ARE RECEIVING AND FROM WHICH SOURCES. (YOU MIGHT WISH TO PROBE THE DEGREE OF FAVORITISM THE SAUDIS SHOW FOR THE CONSERVATIVE, MOSLEM ELF OVER MARXIST, CHRISTIAN EPLF AND WHAT MEANS THE SAUDIS HAVE FOR ENSURING THAT THEIR AID GOES TO THEIR FAVORITE RATHER THAN BEING SHARED OUT AMONG THE THREE GROUPS.)

4. HOW DOES THE SAG EVALUATE THE RECENT REPORT FROM KHARTOUM INDICATING THAT THE EPLF AND THE ELF HAVE FORMED A JOINT POLITICAL COMMITTEE AND A JOINT MILITARY COMMITTEE? DO THE SAUDIS THINK THAT OSMAN SALEH SABBE'S
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ELF/PLF WILL JOIN AS WELL? DOES THIS RECENT MOVE TOWARD UNITY HAVE ANY BETTER CHANCE OF SUCCESS THAN PREVIOUS MOVES OF THIS SORT? IF IT WERE SUCCESSFUL, WOULD THIS HELP TO PERSUADE THE ETHIOPIANS TO NEGOTIATE?

5. DO THE SAUDIS EXPECT THAT THE RECENT MOVES WILL SIGNIFICANTLY ENHANCE THE MILITARY CAPABILITY OF THE ERITREANS? IS IT LIKELY TO LEAD TO AN EARLY MILITARY SUCCESS, SUCH AS THE CAPTURE OF ASMARA AND/OR MASSAWA? WOULD THE ERITREANS BE LIKELY TO TRY TO CAPTURE ASMARA IN ORDER TO DECLARE INDEPENDENCE AND SECURE INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION? WHAT WOULD THE SAG POSITION BE IN SUCH A CASE?

6. WE BELIEVE THAT INSTABILITY WOULD REMAIN ENDEMIC TO THE AREA IF THE ERITREANS ATTEMPTED TO WREST INDEPENDENCE FROM AN UNWILLING ETHIOPIA SINCE ETHIOPIA WOULD CLEARLY NOT LET THE MATTER REST BUT WOULD CONTINUOUSLY SEEK TO REASSERT ITS CONTROL OVER ERITREA. EVEN IF THE INSURGENCY DRAGGED ON DESPITE THE BEST ETHIO/CUBAN/SOVIET EFFORTS, SUCH AN ERITREAN SITUATION CANNOT FAIL BUT ACT AS A SERIOUSLY DESTABILIZING FACTOR ON THE AREA IN GENERAL AND

SPECIFICALLY ON THE SUDAN. DO THE SAUDIS SHARE OUR VIEW THAT NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT IS MORE LIKELY TO BRING STABILITY TO THE REGION THAN WOULD A PROBABLY SHORT-LIVED ERITREAN ASSERTION OF INDEPENDENCE?

7. FOLLOWING THE FAILURE OF THE ERITREAN ATTEMPT TO TAKE MASSAWA, AND GIVEN THE POSSIBILITY THAT SOVIET ADVISERS AND CUBAN COMBAT UNITS MIGHT NOW BE DEPLOYED IN ERITREA, WILL THE ERITREANS BE MORE WILLING TO ACCEPT A NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT BASED ON AUTONOMY THAN WHEN THE TIDE OF BATTLE SEEMED TO BE MOVING IN THEIR FAVOR? DO THE SAUDIS SEE ANY EVIDENCE THAT THE EPMG WOULD ENTERTAIN ANYTHING LESS

THAN MILITARY VICTORY OVER THE ERITREANS?
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8. IF THERE WERE TO BE A NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT, WHAT WOULD BE THE MINIMUM ELEMENTS OF AUTONOMY WHICH THE ERITREANS WOULD REQUIRE AND THE MAXIMUM THAT THE EPMG MIGHT BE WILLING TO CONCEDE? WHAT SAFEGUARDS WOULD THE ERITREANS REQUIRE TO ENSURE AGAINST A REPETITION OF THE 1962 TERMINATION OF THE FEDERATION? WHAT GUARANTEES OF ACCESS TO THE SEA WOULD BE LIKELY TO SATISFY ETHIOPIA AND BE ENFORCEABLE?

9. IF THE SAG AGREES THAT A NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT MIGHT BE IN THE SAG INTEREST, WHAT WOULD BE THE BEST METHOD FOR GETTING TALKS STARTED? SINCE THE FEDERATION WHICH ETHIOPIA TERMINATED IN 1962 WAS THE CREATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS, WOULD IT BE USEFUL TO SECURE UN ACTION TO STIMULATE NEGOTIATIONS? WOULD THE EPMG BE LIKELY TO OPPOSE UN ACTION? COULD THE ARAB LEAGUE AND/OR THE OAU PLAY A ROLE IN THE NEGOTIATION PROCESS? HAS THE SUDANESE RAPPROCHEMENT WITH ETHIOPIA REACHED A STAGE WHERE A RENEWAL OF PAST SUDANESE MEDIATION EFFORTS WOULD BE LIKELY TO BE FRUITFUL? VANCE

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLITICAL SITUATION
Control Number: n/a
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Draft Date: 21 mar 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978STATE072519
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: RPOST:AB
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780124-1112
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From: STATE
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Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780341/aaaabioq.tel
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Litigation History:
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Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
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Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
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Retention: 0
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Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 06 jun 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3251924
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: ERITREA FOLLOWING ARE POINTS AND QUESTIONS ON ERITREA WHICH YOU MIGHT WISH TO DRAW ON IN CONVERSATIONS WITH SAUDI
TAGS: PINS, ET, UR, CU, SA
To: MOGADISCIO
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/542661c0-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014